United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Head of United Nations International Drug Control Programme calls for additional assistance from member countries to finance programme.

- Security Council holds consultations to discuss whether to reduce or lift sanctions against Iraq.

- About $9.5 million pledged to United Nations Repatriation Programme to help Western Saharans to participate in referendum.

- Permanent Representative of Germany reiterates invitation of Foreign Minister to hold 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Berlin.

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Today, at Headquarters, the Executive Director of the newly-established United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Giorgio Giacomelli, called for additional assistance to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, which is part of the Programme. The Fund's budget was only $70 million, he said -- "an amount which might seem ridiculous in relation to the challenges of the drug problem".

He said the United Nations' role in fighting the drug problem was to provide technical assistance as well as guidance, and, given sufficient resources, to help with projects. The Fund's approach was to provide economic alternatives so that the elimination of the cultivation of poppies and coca would go hand in hand in with the development of structures, access to markets and the provision of technical assistance and credit, he said.

In a separate development, the Social Committee of the Economic and Social Council has been winding up a week of work aimed at enhancing the international community's effectiveness in combating the drug problem.

Yesterday, the Committee approved 11 draft resolutions including recommendations for controlling and monitoring "precursor" chemicals -- substances used in the production of illicit drugs, coordinating demand

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reduction policies and increasing regional cooperation in anti-drug efforts. The Committee also proposed that the Council ask the Secretary-General to cooperate with interested parties in promoting the United Nations drug law enforcement training manual, and to establish subregional training centres for drug law enforcement officials.

The Council would further ask the Secretary-General to convene a ministerial-level meeting in the Near and Middle East to enhance regional cooperation in stopping drug abuse and trafficking, particularly in relation to transit routes in the area.

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The Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon to discuss the question of sanctions against Iraq.

According to paragraph 21 of resolution 687 (1991), setting the terms for a cease-fire, the Council shall review the provisions of paragraph 20 every 60 days in light of the policies and practices of the Government of Iraq, including the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, for the purpose of determining whether to reduce or lift the sanctions called for in the resolution.

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Voluntary contributions totalling about $9.5 million, in cash or in kind, have been pledged by representatives of the donor community in support of the Voluntary Repatriation Programme to help the Western Saharans who were eligible to participate in the referendum and who wished to return home to do so. The contributions were announced at a Pledging Conference held in Geneva last week by the secretariat of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

The States pledging contributions were Spain, Austria, Japan, Switzerland, Algeria, Canada, Uruguay, Poland and Norway.

Opening the meeting, Secretary-General Javiér Perez de Cuéllar said that unless those who were to participate in the referendum were free to return to their homeland, a referendum could hardly take place. As soon as the necessary financial backing, estimated at $34.5 million, had been assured, UNHCR would begin ascertaining the repatriation wishes of Western Saharans as they were registered to vote, making arrangements for their return travel and establishing reception centres in cooperation with MINURSO.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, said that although the return of the Saharans was an integral element of the overall settlement plan, it had been decided that the Voluntary Repatriation Programme should be funded from voluntary contributions. In practical terms, the funding should be assured by mid-July at the latest.

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Morocco, France, United States, United Kingdom and Germany indicated at the Conference that their pledges would be announced later.

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German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has extended an invitation to the United Nations to hold the 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Berlin.

The offer to host the Conference was reiterated by the Ambassador of Germany, Detlev Graf Zu Rantzau, in a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 14 June. He said the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights would be the first major United Nations conference to be held in the formerly divided city.

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